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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT  
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 17, 2007

#### In Today's Papers

##### Erdogan Warns the Kurds on Kirkuk

All papers report Prime Minister Erdogan told an AKP group meeting Tuesday that Kirkuk belongs to all Iraqi people and not to a single ethnic group. Turkey cannot be a bystander in the face of growing strains among the ethnic Arabs, Kurds and the Turkmen, Erdogan asserted, adding Turkey resents Kurdish efforts to take control of the disputed oil-rich city. Erdogan recalled that Turkey sheltered more than 500,000 Iraqi Kurdish refugees escaping the attacks of the Iraqi army following a failed Kurdish insurgency in early 1991. "Turkey has not remained indifferent to the plight of Kurds escaping oppression and death, and today, we will not remain indifferent to the Turkmen and Arabs in Kirkuk.

The Turkish Parliament will convene a special session Thursday to discuss an AKP motion to debate developments in Iraq. If the motion is approved, the parliament will convene in a closed session on Tuesday.

##### Gul, Gonul, Buyukanit to Visit the US

Sabah reports Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul will meet with Secretary Rice in Washington during the week of February 5. Gul will move on to New York after wrapping up talks in Washington, including one with the representatives of the Jewish lobby. Gul is expected to discuss with Americans the issues of Iraq, Kirkuk and the possible Armenian genocide draft to be submitted to the US Congress. Hurriyet says Defense Minister Vecdi Gonul will also go to the US soon, before the Turkish General Staff (TGS) chief General Yasar Buyukanit travels to Washington next month for talks on the situation in Iraq and the PKK.

Meanwhile, on Wednesday, the Turkish Foreign Ministry (MFA) responded in a statement to a column in today's Hurriyet which claims Gul said at a recent meeting in Istanbul, "The existing conjuncture in the US is negative; it will be difficult at this point to block an Armenian genocide proposal." MFA said, "Foreign

Minister Gul told the gathering that Turkey has stepped up efforts to prevent the Armenian bill, stressing that such a possibility should be eliminated considering the huge damage it will inflict on Turkey-US ties."

Iraqi Turkmen want to Arm against Kurds

The left-leaning/nationalist Cumhuriyet says on its front page that the Turkmen in Kirkuk want to arm themselves, fearing otherwise they will be driven from the city by Kurds who want to make it part of the autonomous Kurdish region of northern Iraq. Kirkuk provincial assembly's Turkmen member Ali Mehdi Sadik warned Turkey, "All ethnic and religious groups except the Turkmen have armed militias; we'll be destroyed if we don't arm." Sadik, who participated in "Kirkuk: 2007" panel meeting held in Ankara over the weekend, told Cumhuriyet that the police and security forces in Kirkuk are controlled by either Shiites or Kurds, adding that the Kurds have sent 20,000 peshmerge to Kirkuk. Sadik noted, "Kirkuk must be given a special status. Fighting in Kirkuk will soon spread all over Iraq, there will be huge bloodshed."

Several papers report that the final communique of the "Kirkuk: 2007" meeting, sponsored by the Turkish Global Strategy Institute and joined by all Iraqi groups except the Kurds, said Kirkuk was an Iraqi city. A planned referendum to determine the future of the oil-rich city must be put off until the Iraqi Constitution is reviewed. The Iraqi government and international organizations must be asked to halt actions such as forced migration, abduction, killings, and rights violations in Kirkuk, said the communique.

Mainstream Milliyet says a UN human rights report warned a crisis is looming in Kirkuk with the Kurdish peshmerge intimidating the Arabs and Turkmen through methods such as arbitrary detentions and mistreatment.

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Editorial Commentary on Iraq

Commenting in the leftist Birgun, Mete Cubukcu argues that the US has a "Plan B" to deal with the region if Iraq becomes a divided country: "Not counting any undisclosed plans, there are at least seven plans on Iraq known by the public. President Bush has added one more to that recently. This is going to be the last plan on Iraq as far as the Bush administration is concerned, yet failure seems inevitable. The situation poses an odd picture. The US occupied the country, destroyed the infrastructure as well as provoked enmity by ignoring ethnic and sectarian balances, yet the same US is now talking about the potential problems if these issues remain unaddressed. Being aware of the course of events leading towards division, the Bush administration hopes to create an iron fist by enhancing central authority. The new plan signals more bloody and large scale operations using the excuse of fighting against insurgents. Breaking the resistance is one difficult thing by itself, and the US once again is ignoring the potential harm to itself caused by angering ordinary people with the operations. On the other hand, the US seems well prepared for the plan B in case Iraq's division becomes a reality. The US is handing out 'threat cards' to the countries in the region, including Turkey. Turkey gets the 'Kurdish card' while Saudi Arabia and Egypt get the 'Iran card.' In sum, the US plans to implement a controlled-crisis management style in case of a divided Iraq by using sectarian differences and making everybody in the region fight with each other."

Ismail Kapan writing in the conservative-nationalist Turkiye, concludes that the US Broader Middle East Project was really all about controlling oil resources: "The Broader Middle East Project was promoted as a democracy project and ended up unleashing the real intention following the allocation of Iraqi oil to American and British companies. But this is not going to be enough. The Broader Middle East idea hopes to control oil reserves but at the same time hopes to retain the US role as super power by blocking other powers from emerging. The US does not want any challenge in its super power capability and wants to defer a potential conflict with China as long as possible, until around 2030. Given the current stage, the US strategy may not work out as planned. The Broader ME Initiative has already experienced a colossal failure. Nevertheless

the US will come up with many more plans in order to keep its supremacy at all costs. Washington will not hesitate to implement contingency plans to realize its goals even if it takes a regional war or extended sectarian fighting in the region."

EU: Direct Flights to 'TRNC' Impossible without Nicosia's Approval

Mainstream Milliyet reports that following Britain, EU jurists said direct flights to Turkish Cyprus would not be possible unless the breakaway region in the north gains international recognition. "According to International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) rules, states allow flights through their airspaces in line with the agreements they make with ICAO. Since the only government that has secured a deal with ICAO is the Greek Cypriot side, it's not possible to launch direct flights to the north of the island without approval from Nicosia," European jurists said.

Hisarciklioglu Joins Debates on Presidential Elections  
The Turkish Union of Chambers (TOBB) president Rifat Hisarciklioglu criticized in the liberal/intellectual Radikal the elite business grouping TUSIAD's call on Recep Tayyip Erdogan to "continue as the PM and not become Turkey's new president," saying such a statement may be interpreted as support for the ruling AKP before the forthcoming general elections in Turkey. "Erdogan has not yet announced whether he will run for president or not," Hisarciklioglu said, "TOBB is Turkey's leading civic organization; we try to keep an equal distance to all parties in an effort to preserve our integrity." He noted that the focus of debates should not be persons eyeing the presidential post, but "the system."

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A Woman for Top Post at TUSIAD

Hurriyet reports a woman, Arzuhan Yalcindag, may become the next head of TUSIAD, Turkey's most influential business forum, in an election on January 25. Yalcindag, the chairwoman of Dogan Media Holding and the daughter of Turkish business tycoon Aydin Dogan, is a member of several foundations and organizations including the American-Turkish Council.

Group Warns against Internet Crackdown in Turkey

Milliyet reports the Turkish Informatics Platform, an association of over 20 communications NGOs said in a statement entitled "The Internet is Not Guilty," that they fear a crackdown by authorities using pornography as an excuse. The statement said a new draft bill which aims to "monitor, screen and censor the Internet" as an anti-child pornography move, may prove to be detrimental with regard to individual rights and freedoms. "Legal arrangements are necessary, however, attempts to regulate the Internet only through debates on matters such as child pornography will not produce a healthy result," it maintained.

TV Highlights

NTV (6 A.M.)

Domestic News

- Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul will participate in the January 24-28 World Economic Forum meeting in Davos.
- Five terrorists and one officer have been killed in security operations in the Kurdish southeastern city of Diyarbakir.
- The International University Sports Foundation (FISU) decided to hold the "Winter Universiade 2011" games in the eastern city of Erzurum in Turkey. Erzurum was competing with the Slovenian city of Maribor in the bidding.
- The ruling AKP government is preparing to change the status of 215,000 temporary workers into municipal and state employees.
- S&P analyst Farouk Soussa finds it unlikely for Turkey to curb the inflation to 4 percent by the end of the year.

International News

- President Bush said the execution of Saddam Hussein looked like a "revenge killing" which will make harder to persuade Americans to support the government in Baghdad.

- President Papadopoulos said he does not expect substantial progress on efforts to reunite Cyprus until after Turkish general elections due in November.

- The Israeli Army Chief of Staff, Dan Halutz, submitted his resignation to the Israeli government yesterday.

<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/ankara/>

WILSON